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Ed Young has heart surgery

HOUSTON (BP) — Ed Young, pastor of Second Church in Houston, Texas, is at home recovering from triple bypass surgery, reported Gary Moore, senior associate pastor of the church. Moore said Young was released from the hospital June 3 after undergoing the 90-minute surgery May 27. "He came through beautifully and has made great progress since," Moore said. "He's expected to make a total recovery and be back [in the pulpit] as soon as doctors feel like it's right thing to do."

Giving to Lottie up despite economy

RICHMOND, Va. (BP and local reports) — Southern Baptists stayed true to their passion for telling the world about Jesus, in spite of a weakened economy and sluggish recovery, by giving \$148.9 million to support international missionaries through the 2009 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

It is the third-largest Lottie Moon offering in history. "We are not disappointed as God proves His faithfulness through Southern Baptists, and giving through Lottie Moon reflects the heart of our churches and their Great Commission commitment," said Jerry Rankin, International Mission Board (IMB) president. "Constituting more than half of the IMB's annual budget, the Lottie Moon offering dramatically impacts our ability to take the Gospel to the lost world."

"I am deeply grateful for the increase in giving, some \$7.6 million above the 2008 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, and for the sacrifice made by Southern Baptists during these difficult economic times."

Rankin, a Mississippi native, has announced his retirement on July 31. He and his wife Bobbye, also a Mississippi native, plan to reside in Clinton.

More than four million dollars of the \$7.6 million increase came from a special "over and above" offering challenge issued last summer by a number of seminary presidents and other SBC leaders. The extra funds allowed the IMB to send missionaries placed on hold by financial shortfalls earlier than planned and prevented even deeper reductions in the IMB's global missionary force.

Because of Southern Baptist support, missionaries and their national partners were responsible for baptizing more than 506,000 believers and starting 24,650 new churches across the globe in 2008.

"For this year's total to be the third-highest in the history of the offering is remarkable given the economic challenges that continue to impact many across the U.S.," said Wanda Lee, Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) executive director/treasurer. "It is truly a tes-



ON SCENE — Missionary Delores York (right) comforts a patient at a medical clinic in Jimani, Dominican Republic, who was injured during the Jan. 12 earthquake that struck Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Southern Baptists' gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering enable York and other IMB missionaries to share Christ's love around the world without the burden of raising their own financial support. (BP photo)

timony to the faithfulness of God and the deep-rooted commitment among Southern Baptists to share Jesus with those around the world who have yet to hear of His love.

"We are grateful for WMU leaders and members who champion the missions cause in their churches through personal involvement and by urging Southern Baptists to give sacrificially and pray fervently for missions."

While the \$148.9 million offering meets the requirements for the IMB's 2010 operating budget, it doesn't allow room for growth or reversal of budget cuts.

"This generous offering will allow us to

meet our operational needs but most of our capital needs will be postponed for another year," said IMB financial chief David Steverson. "With our other major sources of income holding steady or only slightly declining, we are grateful that, for now, we don't anticipate further reductions in our missionary force below 5,000."

Last year IMB trustees were forced to curb appointments of new missionaries and suspend two short-term missionary programs entirely, initiating a gradual reduction in the IMB's global missionary force.

First Buckets of Hope released for victims of earthquake

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (BP and local reports) — After languishing in the Port-au-Prince port for more than a month, the first shipping container filled with Buckets of Hope was released by the Haitian government on June 2.

The container, owned by the Florida Baptist Convention, carried buckets of various family necessities donated by Southern Baptists across the country. A second container owned by the Florida convention and filled with 41,200 pounds of rice was released June 2 from the port in Saint Marc, located north of the capital city.

Mississippi Baptists also participated in the Southern Baptist Convention-wide campaign to provide supplies to destitute Haitians, donating more than 5,700 buckets. There was no word on whether or when the Mississippi supplies would be released by authorities.

The buckets contain food items such as

rice, black beans, flour, cooking oil, and sugar, as well as other items that can be used by Haitian families. The Gospel message is labeled on every bucket. Once empty, the buckets can be used for a number of other purposes.

"I shouted for joy," said Dennis Wilbanks of the Florida convention's partnership missions department, who is serving on-site in Haiti. "From another disappointing day of it not happening, to the good news that our first container of Buckets of Hope being released, I am flooded with emotion. I am humbled to experience the joy of this day."

There is urgency to delivering the buckets to Haitian pastors and distributing the contents to their communities as soon as possible, Wilbanks said. "We must give the distribution report to the government officials in order to get more released."

During the months of February and

March, more than 152,000 Buckets of Hope were packed by Southern Baptists as they sought to alleviate some of the hunger after the devastating Jan. 12 earthquake. The buckets are labeled with the Gospel message.

After being collected and sent to locations in Florida and Shreveport, La., the buckets were placed in shipping containers before being sent to Haiti.

Only a portion of the containers were sent to Haiti initially, but these have been backlogged for weeks by government bureaucracy. Wilbanks and other Florida convention staff members had been working their way through the highest Haitian government channels in requesting the release of the containers.

Fritz Wilson, Florida Baptists' disaster relief director, said another 14-16 containers are awaiting release from the Haitian ports.

Chaplains dispatched to oil emergency area

GULF COAST of Louisiana (BP and local reports) — The Louisiana Baptist Convention will begin dispatching disaster relief (DR) chaplains to the oil-beleaguered Gulf Coast areas of the state beginning June 7.

"We received a request June 2 from emergency management officials 'and we are sending 12 DR chaplains a week for the next few months or as long as needed,'" said Gibbie McMillan, disaster relief director for the Louisiana convention. "They will be in Grande Isle, Venice, etc."

James Carson, the convention's DR chaplaincy coordinator and director of missions for Caldwell, Deer Creek and Richland Baptist associations, followed up June 2 by contacting the regional DR chaplaincy coordinator Joe Arnold, who is director of missions for Bayou Baptist Association just north of the Gulf, to alert DR chaplains in the area to prepare to be called out the week of June 7.

"Everyone is engaged in vigorous conversation," said Duane McDaniel, executive director of the Baptist Association of Greater New Orleans. "Everyone recognizes that there is a disaster unfolding, and we're just seeing the tip of the wellhead [of need]. We'll be dealing with the devastation for the long term."

Don Gann, consultant in the

Mississippi Baptist Men's Ministry Department which is responsible for disaster relief activities, said no requests have been received to mobilize Mississippi Baptist resources due to the oil spill.

"We're prepared to go when called," he said.

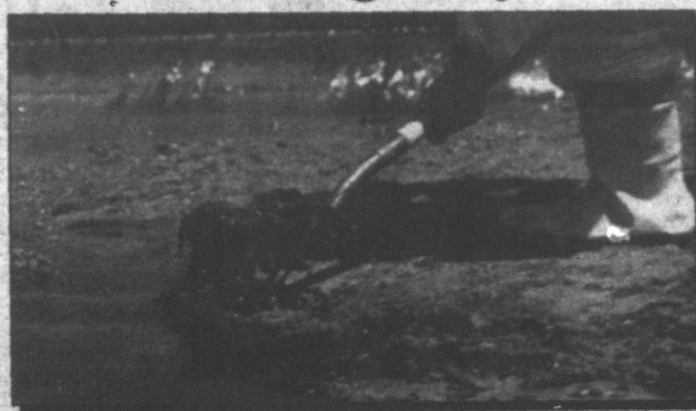
"We know what to do with hurricanes, but this manmade disaster has hidden victims," Arnold said. "This is going to be a long-term thing — we're talking years. Right now the tension is so touchy down there [at the water's edge]. There's a lot of frustration."

"Everything is just too fluid to see how it's going to play out," said Eddie Painter, commercial fisherman and pastor of Barataria (La.) Church. "Everybody's pretty tense."

The oil spill resulting from the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig on April 20 has affected an estimated third of the fishing waters in the Gulf of Mexico.

"This is not an overwhelming-crushing-moment crisis; it's prolonged," said pastor Craig Ratliff of Celebration Arabi Church in St. Bernard Parish. "You wake up tomorrow and wonder if it's going to be worse than today."

Thus, ministry to help alleviate that tension has become the initial way Southern Baptists



UNCERTAIN FUTURE — As the oil spill continues to exact a toll on Gulf Coast communities in Louisiana, the state's Baptists will begin dispatching chaplains to interact with people about the uncertainty and dim future they face while reminding them of the strength to be found when Jesus is in their hearts. ((c) BP p.l.c. Photo from BP corporate website)

are responding to the disaster, say Louisiana Baptist DR personnel, pastors and directors of missions, disaster relief, several of whom did onsite assessments of the situation over the Memorial Day weekend.

McDaniel and David Maxwell, disaster relief coordinator for the New Orleans association, met May 28 with Painter, Steve McNeal, pastor of First Church in Venice, the farthest-south town in Louisiana; and Lynn Rodrigue, pastor of Port Sulphur Church.

The "situation" includes a 1,500-person tent village being built for oil spill workers. "The infrastructure is not designed for that many people," Maxwell said.

McNeal talked about the possibility of acquiring exercise equipment and using First Church Venice's building as a fitness center. He also suggested showing films in the church at night.

Rodrigue mentioned the possibility of providing facilities for volunteers in future DR-related efforts as they evolve. The men determined a feeding ministry is not needed at the present time. Block parties and other children/family activities are possibilities.

Various ways of connecting with the fishing industry families and with those coming to

the region's rescue were discussed.

"Southern Baptists care, and they want to show they care," McDaniel said. "It's in the long run — through the relationships built — that we show we care. The pastors there are talking about the psychological and spiritual well-being of the families. The tensions are there and it could be an explosive powder keg situation down the road."

Logistics and health/safety issues need to be worked out before large groups come to minister along the Gulf Coast, Maxwell said.

The big need, all said, is for trained disaster relief counselors who will sit and listen to people talk about losing not only their livelihood but also their heritage, who will sit and listen to people talk about the uncertainty, the dashed hopes and dim future, and who will remind people that with the strength of Jesus in their hearts, this too they can get through.

Southern Baptist DR-trained counselors have waited to get involved in the disaster until being asked by emergency management officials to do so, McMillan said. According to the DR charter, Southern Baptist DR personnel always respond to requests rather than initiate action unsolicited.



THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)

2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)

3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)

4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Lesbian ordained

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — A West Coast diocese of the Episcopal Church has become the first to ordain an openly lesbian bishop, further straining the relationship between the U.S. branch and the worldwide Anglican Communion. Mary Douglas Glasspool, 56, was consecrated as an assistant bishop at the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles in May with about 3,000 people in attendance. While she is the first openly homosexual woman to be promoted to such a status, she follows the ordination of the church's first openly homosexual bishop, V. Gene Robinson, who was consecrated in 2003. "I am a reconciling person and I will seek to reach out and engage with people who believe or think differently than I do, and try to build a relationship with them," Glasspool said, according to Reuters. Glasspool will assume her post at the 70,000-member diocese July 1. Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury and titular head of the Anglican Communion, said her ordination "raises very serious questions not just for the Episcopal Church and its place in the Anglican Communion but for the Communion as a whole," but he did not elaborate. The Church of Ireland, which is part of the Anglican Communion, disapproved of the move. "We wish to express sorrow that Mary Glasspool, a person who is living in a same-sex relationship, is to be consecrated," the Church of Ireland said in a statement, according to CNN. "The elevation to senior church leadership of a person whose lifestyle is contrary to the will of God revealed in scripture is both wrong and disappointing." In recent years, as the rift grew more intense, some conservative Episcopalians left to form their own church, the Anglican Church in North America. Glasspool, who most recently served in Maryland, said she made her sexuality clear in her presentation to the Diocese of Los Angeles, which also was considering another openly homosexual candidate. She told The Baltimore Sun she has been in a relationship with social worker Becki Sander since 1988, and she is comfortable as a symbol of hope for homosexual clergy. Also in the interview, Glasspool shared her perspective on the controversy. "It has to do not with issues of sexuality but of power and authority," she said. "You don't hear an outcry about ordaining lesbians and gay people. But once they attain more authority and leadership there's an outcry."

Looking back

10 years ago

The Southern Baptist Historical Society, independent of the SBC since 1995, authorizes a committee May 26 to study whether the 62-year-old organization should remove "Southern Baptist" from its name.

20 years ago

L. Edward (Ed) Gandy is the new director of missions for Alcorn Association, Corinth. Gandy goes to the new position from the pastorate of First Church, Kosciusko, where he served since 1977.

50 years ago

Twenty-eight Mississippi Baptists are scheduled to leave this weekend to attend the 10th Congress of the Baptist World Alliance in Rio de Janeiro June 26 – July 23. The group is leaving early to visit mission fields and other points of religious interest en route.



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GCR report: study it, and pray

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
— Matthew 28:18-20 NIV

Christian men and women of integrity can disagree on many issues, but there's one point on which there can be no argument. One simply cannot deny our Lord and Savior's Great Commission and still claim to be a Christian. It's just not possible. To do so would be contrary to the nature of God as we understand Him and His desire to draw all people to Him through His Son, Jesus Christ.

The spare words of the Great Commission, spoken so eloquently, sum up Jesus' reason for leaving the comforts of heaven to suffer rejection, betrayal, brutality, and an extremely painful and humiliating death at the hands of man: God loves us so much that He wants us to spend eternity with Him, and it is every Christian's mission to help spread that truth around the world.

It is with deepest awe and reverence that I approach that responsibility with respect to the work of the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force, which was charged by messengers to the 2009 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention with positioning the future of the convention to accomplish the goal of the Great Commission.

First of all, perhaps the framers of the original motion to organize the task force should have been more circumspect about the name. Everyone wants to accomplish

"THANK YOU, MR. BELLOCOSE. NOW IN RESPONSE, WE WILL ASK DR. LEARNED TO GIVE US HIS OVER-REACTION!"



the Great Commission, but teaming this grand command of the Lord with the word "resurgence" might lead people to believe that Southern Baptists have discarded the Great Commission. Nothing could be further from reality.

Secondly, "resurgence" has become a politically-charged word in the world of Southern Baptists ever since conservatives won control of the convention and began to refer to their victory as the Conservative Resurgence. Now that a second, named resurgence is upon us, it's reasonable to assume some people will be naturally suspicious of the name.

For example, what is to become of the people who vote against the task force's final report at the 2010 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Orlando next week, especially if it isn't

approved? They will almost certainly be accused of being opposed to the Great Commission. Just as many well-meaning and serious Baptists were labeled during the earlier years of the Conservative Resurgence as not believing in the Bible, name-calling could happen again with regard to the Great Commission Resurgence.

We must not allow that to happen, regardless of which side of the debate we find ourselves.

Of greater concern is the proposal within the final report to create a new financial category called, "Great Commission Giving." This proposal is a rather obvious attempt by some megachurch pastors — Johnny Hunt, SBC president who appointed the task force, and Ronnie Floyd, who was appointed task force chairman by Hunt, to name only a couple — who want to blunt criticism of their churches' threadbare support of the Cooperative Program.

While the churches of Hunt and Floyd have increased their Cooperative Program support over the past couple of years due to the criticism, it's still a pittance compared to the sacrificial Cooperative Program giving of many other Southern Baptist churches. While Southern Baptist churches are free to give to any cause they choose, the money can't be counted as Cooperative Program giving. That is as it should be, and should remain so.

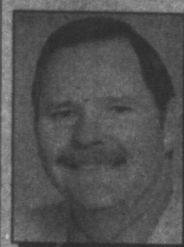
This is not to say that the report has no merit. It certainly has its good points, as well as some items that are troubling. The only way to decide where one stands on the report and its implications for the future of the Southern Baptist Convention is to study the report for themselves at www.Pray4GCR.com, and then pray earnestly for the Lord's wisdom and direction.

If we all do that, there's no way we can go wrong.

GUEST OPINION:

Cooperative Program and equal sacrifice

By Timothy Boyd
Topeka, Kansas



I recently had lunch with Johnny Hunt, our Southern Baptist Convention president, at Midwestern Seminary. He was there to speak to a student conference. During lunch, the eight or nine of us who had been invited had the opportunity to discuss the Great Commission Resurgence emphasis that Hunt has championed. It was a frank, yet friendly, discussion.

Some of what we discussed centered on the question of who and what we appreciate and honor in the Southern Baptist Convention. One of Hunt's frustrations, like many pastors of larger churches, is that Southern Baptists have not acknowledged the large amounts of money given by his church and others like it.

The complaint raised against many large churches has been that they tend to give a much lower percent of their budgets to the Cooperative Program than many smaller churches. Hunt rightly noted that the Cooperative Program has never emphasized a percent. In recent years some have suggested that 10% is a proper amount for churches to send to

the Cooperative Program. While some churches in the SBC have felt led to increase to an even larger percent, many of the larger churches have reduced their percent over the years to between two and four percent.

In light of this lunch conversation, I began to think about what I was taught about the Cooperative Program in my early days of ministry. I was not raised a Southern Baptist. I came to faith in Christ as a young adult, and I became a Southern Baptist at the same time. I didn't understand the Cooperative Program at first, but once I understood it I came to have a deep appreciation of

what it does in allowing Southern Baptists to fulfill the Great Commission.

Hunt is correct. I was never taught that there was a proper percent to give. I was taught a more important principle of equal sacrifice. I was taught that it did not matter the size of the church or the size of the budget. What was important was that we cooperatively work together and equally sacrifice to see the Great Commission go forward — but doesn't that get us back to the question of percents? How can we say that a church giving two percent is sacrificing equally with churches giving over 10 percent?

As I thought about what I had been taught, I remembered the widow. You remember her, don't you? Jesus noted her sacrifice in Luke 21:1-4. He saw rich men casting large amounts into the temple treasury. The amounts were apparently large but did not require great sacrifice. The widow stood with them and threw in two small coins that were a pittance in comparison with what the rich men had each thrown in.

However, Jesus commended that widow and her gift because of the sacrifice that she made.

Which model should we follow as Southern Baptists? What will we honor and recognize? Will Southern Baptists continue to place our emphasis upon equal sacrifice and promote the example of the widow? Or, will Southern Baptists look only at the dollars and promote the example of the rich men in Jesus' story?

What would Jesus do?

Boyd is editor of the Baptist Digest, newsjournal of the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists

First Person: Is GCR report the best way to 'penetrate lostness'?

By Steve Horn, pastor
First Church, Lafayette, La.

Much has been written, and no doubt will continue to be written, about the final report to be presented from the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force (GCRTF) to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Orlando.

One can read about the strengths and weaknesses of the recommendations from far more knowledgeable — and for that matter more prominent — Southern Baptists than this present author. However, I believe that I do have a unique perspective as a "younger" pastor — if I still qualify as young being a few months shy of 40 years old.

If one believes the rhetoric in some circles, the younger generation of Southern Baptist leaders has little to no use for the cooperative work of the Southern Baptist Convention, at least to the degree that they see the value in leading their churches to give sacrificially and aggressively to the Cooperative Program (CP).

Unfortunate phrases like "bloated bureaucracy" have been used to describe the work of some of our denominational

entities in general and specifically the work of state conventions. As a member of the Executive

Board of the Louisiana Baptist Convention for the past five years and now president of this Executive Board, I want to be on record for stating my serious objection to such a charge.

As with any organization, mistakes have been made along the way, but a pattern of wasteful spending in order to keep some kind of denominational bureaucracy going is blatantly false.

I have learned for myself that only in getting involved with the cooperative endeavors of Southern Baptists can I truly see the value of our planned, systematic giving through the Cooperative Program. For example, an organized state convention produced an immediate response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, when even our federal and state governmental agencies were slow in responding. In more recent days, an organized network and partnership of Southern Baptists allowed our church to send 12 medical professionals to Haiti only days after the earthquake.

Moreover, the organization of

our state convention's evangelism team — in partnership and in response to a challenge from the North American Mission Board — provides the planning and encouragement for a coordinated effort like Sharing the Peace of Jesus, an effort to present the Gospel to every home in Louisiana.

Bloated bureaucracy? No! Great Commission results? Yes!

As a result of seeing the Cooperative Program in action, I have serious concerns about the language in the GCRTF report regarding "celebrating Great Commission Giving." While I am pleased with the acknowledgement that the CP should continue to be the main avenue of giving, I see little reason and little good that will come from the additional language of "Great Commission Giving."

To say, as does the report, that one method is preferred implies preference above all others. To leave room then for an alternative — not to mention even a call to celebrate other methods — is confusing at best and deceptive at worst.

One of the members of the GCR Task Force, Robert White, is now suggesting that the intent of the language is to call the combination of CP giving and special offerings for SBC mission endeavors "Great Commission Giving." I am particularly grate-

ful for this clarification, because this is certainly never said in the written report.

I admit that I am still confused as to why we have to have a call to celebrate. My church celebrates our giving not because of a need to be recognized, but because we want to give and have a biblical mandate to give toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission. The bottom line in celebrating non-Cooperative Program forms of giving is that celebration can only really happen when a local church is at the same time aggressively, passionately and sacrificially engaged in Cooperative Program giving.

I will be looking for the members of the task force to unequivocally state this in future correspondence and lead their churches to higher patterns of giving to the CP in future years.

My fear is that some will see my opinion as wanting to remain status quo. Nothing could be further from the truth. I do not want status quo. I do pray for resurgence in all matters related to the Great Commission. I do pray for and preach toward a revival that will result in evangelistic impact to all the nations.

I just believe that we do not have an allocation problem, but rather we have an obedience problem. The people in the pew have a giving problem, and the

preachers in the pulpit, I am afraid, have a spending and an ego problem.

We have become overly consumed with getting the credit for penetrating lostness, rather than making sure that whatever is accomplished is all for God's glory.

What then is the answer? First of all, do not believe the scare tactic that if the recommendations of this report do not pass, the younger generation will bypass the Cooperative Program in order to send their church's money directly to the mission field. I know plenty of younger generation pastors that are deeply committed to the Cooperative Program.

Secondly, we all need to contemplate a higher level of giving both to CP and our special offerings. To simply redirect our current level of giving is obviously not going to solve our financial issues of fulfilling the Great Commission.

Finally, we must all agree that our greatest need is authentic revival.

God, help us to take the Gospel to the next generation and to all the nations, all for the glory of God.

Horn is president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention executive board.



Horn

First Person: GCR report generating misinformation, emotion

By J. Robert White, exec. dir.
Georgia Baptist Convention

Due to the great interest, discussion, and questions related to the GCR Task Force report and recommendations to the Southern Baptist Convention in Orlando, I am... [writing]... to speak to the report. There is a lot of misinformation circulating and no small amount of emotion wrapped up in current discussions. I would like to speak to clarify for you some of the most discussed issues in the report.

First, please read the report for yourself rather than accept someone's interpretation of the report. We have all been dismayed by politicians in D.C. voting on legislation when they never even read the bill. You can download the report at the GCR website, www.Pray4GCR.com.

Having read the report, go to the convention and vote your convictions.

I have heard the most interest and discussion regarding the Cooperative Program. The task force went through some transitions to arrive at the recommendation. First of all, the name of the Cooperative Program does not change. As you read the



White

report you find very strong statements of support for the Cooperative Program as the way Southern Baptists support mission work at home and across the world. In fact, anyone who reads the language of the report will recognize that the Cooperative Program is the way we do missions and it remains the core of our cooperative mission efforts.

For instance, the report states: "The greatest stewardship of Great Commission investment and deployment is giving through the Cooperative Program."

Secondly, we have always

had designated mission gifts. Good examples would be the Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong Offerings, World Hunger Offering, State Missions Offering, Hospital Offering, Children's Home Offering, etc.

The interesting thing about designated mission gifts is that the current system allows churches to count as "other mission gifts," in the "designated" category of the ACP [Annual Church Profile], contributions that are made to non-Southern Baptist parachurch mission organizations. Please read that again. That is amazing.

The new plan eliminates that practice and narrows designations that may be reported to only the mission causes of the Southern Baptist Convention, state conventions, and associations. I believe this is a huge improvement. Then the total of the Cooperative Program and SBC mission causes would be called "Total Great Commission Giving." The total is currently called "Total Mission [Expenditures]."

This does not represent a big

change in terminology for the total, but as someone said, "Great Commission Giving is probably the best term for our missions giving that could be conceived." LifeWay Christian Resources is actually responsible for the Annual Church Profile and how the various line items are labeled, but I am sharing with you the recommendation of the task force and the spirit of the task force that I experienced in the meetings.

Some have argued that a church could just give everything to a seminary as a designation and it would be reported in the total column. They can do that now. This recommendation does not change that reality, nor does it encourage churches to designate their mission offering. Very much to the contrary, churches are encouraged to give their mission gifts through the Cooperative Program.

Persons have taken issue with the low percentage CP giving of some churches represented on the task force. I understand those concerns, but I also want you to know that the dis-

cussions in the room have impacted hearts and new, bold commitments have been made by members of the task force to significantly increase their CP giving.

Dr. Hunt's church [Johnny Hunt, is SBC president and pastor of First Church in Woodstock, Ga.], for instance, has nearly doubled their giving through the Cooperative Program this year and has committed to continue to grow in this area. Dr. Floyd [Ronnie Floyd is GCRTF chairman and pastor of First Church in Springdale, Ar.] reports that his church has increased their CP giving by 58% over the past two years.

Others on the task force have spoken to me about their commitment to increase their Cooperative Program giving. This is good news. I believe something will be said about this at the SBC meeting when the report is given.

Once again, rather than adopting the position of others read the report for yourself and form your own conclusion.

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CMB UGY GYCYM CPY
UGY AKPEJ KL UGSMY
GCMBJ.

GYWPAJ KMY: UYM

Clue: B = D

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Ephesians Five: Two

ATTEMPTING TO UNDERSTAND THE GREAT COMMISSION RESURGENCE

Last June at the Southern Baptist Convention, the messengers of the SBC approved for the president of the Convention to appoint a Great Commission Resurgence Task Force. Appointments were made and the work began. The final report and recommendations will be given this month at the Orlando Convention. While many good people were put on the Task Force, they were given an incredible work which some would describe as an impossible task. They had a brief timeframe in which to gather all of the necessary information, analyze it, pray over it, seek God's will and direction, and come up with new initiatives that would both stir and stimulate Southern Baptists to renewed commitment to Jesus' Great Commission to reach the world.

What took Jesus only a handful of words to send His early church marching across continents now requires over 30 pages to focus on a resurgence. The Task Force put in an incredible amount of time and energy talking with, listening to, and seeking to formulate a way to turn around our declining missions and outreach numbers. The men and women who served on the Task Force are to be commended for their labor.

In meetings, phone calls, personal conversations, and interaction in groups, I have talked with folks across our state about the report. Numerous people have wanted me to write something that would enable them to see the report from a Mississippi perspective. The difficulty for me is in trying to explain some complicated issues that are in the report, wrestle with such a large volume of information of over 30 pages in a thousand word column, and help all of us see that there are some excellent things in the report along with some things that may raise questions or create uncertainty. That coupled with all of the talk, articles, blogs, tweaks, information, misinformation, highly charged emotional rhetoric, some personal attacks, and some character questions have caused me to wonder what in the world could I possibly add to the conversation.

Let me begin with what I would call the undeniabes. Whether or not you agree with some of the report or not, there are some undeniable, factual, and spiritual realities that we need to see. We live in a world without Christ. We are a part of a nation of somewhere over 250 million people who do not know Jesus Christ. We live on a globe with not millions but billions who do not know Christ and many who have never heard His name. Surely, we can do better.

I am grateful to be a part of a people in Mississippi who have taken the Great Commission seriously for decades and have sought to not only reach a com-

munity but also a nation and a world for Christ. From the beginning of united efforts to reach a world for Christ through the Cooperative Program, combined with our gifts through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions and the Annie Armstrong Offering for Home Missions, Mississippi Baptists have given beyond themselves over a billion dollars. Our people have given, prayed, gone, and supported mission efforts in remarkable ways. Still an honest assessment on our part causes us to stop and ask what we can do to make an even greater impact in our communities, state, nation, and world. We cannot live in a self-centered world and accomplish a Christ-centered task.

The problem that the Task Force had is the problem that each of us struggles with and that is can you correct spiritual problems with organizational answers. Though I cannot discuss every aspect of the report and deal with every recommendation, I will comment on a couple of things that people have asked about.

The first one has to do with the relationships that the state conventions have with the North American Mission Board by which resources and funds are provided and channeled into the support of missionaries and/or mission endeavors and church starts. These have been referred to as Cooperative Agreements or strategies agreed upon by the state and the North American Mission Board. For years, Mississippi Baptists have felt that because of our age as a Convention, our strength, and the faithfulness of God's people, we wanted those funds to go to areas of greater need in new work states and great population centers across our land where the Gospel was needed and churches must be started. The Mississippi Baptist Convention can and will do that no later than 2011, but possibly sooner. For most state conventions that is going to be much more difficult to deal with and this issue has created enormous consternation and uncertainty.

A second item of great concern has to do with the Cooperative Program and other giving known as Great Commission Giving. While the final report gives stronger supportive language to the Cooperative Program, this



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

new mission approach known as Great Commission Giving will count all mission giving from a church that goes to any Southern Baptist cause or entity. Though I am not a prophet or the son of a prophet, it seems to me that looking ahead we are putting in place what could be the demise of the Cooperative Program and putting in place the structure of giving to whatever the greatest appeal is at the moment. It is similar to those days before the Cooperative Program became our lifeline to missions and faithful consistent giving with societal giving and fundraisers who would travel around the country appealing for funds. Will that happen immediately? Probably not, but in time the eroding of the solid base of support in Southern Baptist life, the Cooperative Program, may diminish significantly.

One other aspect of the report that I would ask you to think about is the unknowns. Possibly the three most significant leadership roles in Southern Baptist life could be the president of the Executive Committee, the president of the International Mission Board, and the president of the North American Mission Board. In essence, all three positions are open. Many of the recommendations will have significance only as the people who fill these positions, along with their trustees implement them. That

will take time, wisdom, and spiritual empowerment.

Only one of these positions has had a name announced that will be proposed to fill the job and that is Dr. Frank Page at the Executive Committee. While the Search Committee has announced his name, the full Executive Committee must act upon him and some are expressing opposition to him. So who will these three men be to whom we will look to for leadership and to whom will be entrusted the responsibilities to be good stewards to help us reach the world for Christ? In some ways, the selections of these leaders are equally as important as the document on resurgence.

So what do we do as we go to the Convention? Will changes be permitted? Will amendments be made? How do you have a business meeting with 20,000 plus Southern Baptists? How do you digest over 30 pages of material and how do you satisfy 16 million Southern Baptists? It is not a copout on my part to say that first and foremost above everything and beyond any of us we need guidance from the Lord. We need a spiritual intervention from Him apart from which we may just come away from the moment with the world looking at a resurgence of poor attitudes, ill tempers, and displaced passions. We do not need to give the world a reason to say, "Those Baptists may not know how to love, but they sure know how to fight."

The author can be contacted at jfutral@mbcb.org.

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10. Slayden Church, Slayden



11. Fredonia Church, New Albany



12. Parkway Church, Kosciusko



13. Grandview Church, Pearl

9. **Morrison Heights Baptist Church, Clinton**, will host the International Mission Board's "Along the Silk Road" interactive exhibition designed to help people experience the cultures of Central Asia. The exhibition features 6 installations composed of more than 80 large format photographs, 36 hanging and standing banners, Central Asian clothing, musical instruments, and two authentic yurts - the traditional homes of nomadic peoples like the Kazakh and Kyrgyz. The public is invited to come and walk Along the Silk Road beginning June 13, and continuing through June 27. Exhibition hours are 4 till 6 p.m. on Sundays, 1 till 4 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays and 1 till 6 p.m. on Wednesdays.

10. The children's choir of **Slayden Church, Slayden**, presented Living Inside Out in an Upside Down World to several schools as well as their home church. Shown are the participants.

11. The Girls in Action of **Fredonia Church, New Albany**, collected change from the church for the Pure Love Pure Water project. The girls rolled the change and prayed a missionary family would receive a water filter.

12. **Parkway Church, Kosciusko**, recently held and Awana Awards ceremony. The program started with 17 children and finished with an average of 40. Shown are the children and their leaders.

13. The ladies of **Grandview Church, Pearl**, recently completed a quilting class taught by Evelyn Donald. Shown are participants Brenda Stokes, Faye Cagle, Donald, Doris Burrell, Joyce Myers, and Brandi Carr.



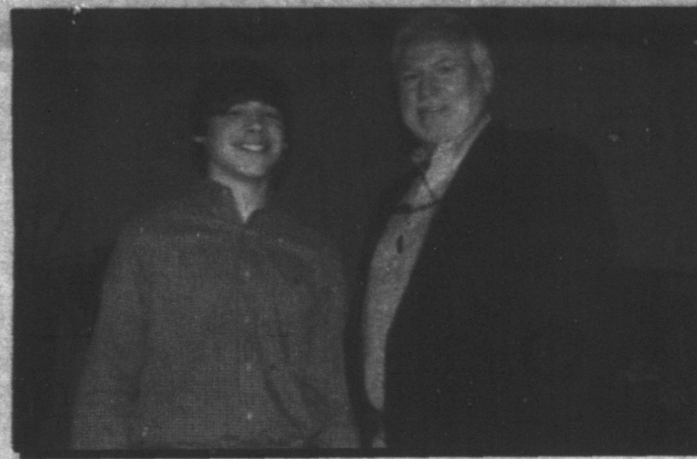
14. **New Hope Church, Covington County**, recognizes its high school graduates. Shown are deacon chairman Sam Herrin, Whitney Bland, Brian Arinder, Cody Pittman, and Shelby Mauldin.

15. **Yellow Leaf Church, Oxford**, had two church members accompany a team from Lafayette-Marshall Association to Tokyo, Japan, on a mission trip. Shown are Zach Cain and Larry Turner.

16. **Springfield Church, Morton**, honored deacon emeritus Herbert W. Cooper May 23. He was honored by a visit from the deacons and given a plaque to commemorate his service. Shown are pastor Marty Wilson, Carl Woolery, Jody Wheeler, Homer Willingham, Cooper, Daniel Napp, Kendall Winstead, James Sonnenberg, Danny Wade, and David Watts.



14. New Hope Church, Covington County



15. Yellow Leaf Church, Oxford



16. Springfield Church, Morton



MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS



1. Yellow Leaf Church, Oxford



2. First Church, Philadelphia



3. Macedonia Church, Petal



4. Sumrall and Dowdy



5. Old Oak Grove Church, Union County



6. Lighthouse Mission, Greenville



7. Rocky Point Church, Leake Association



8. River Bend Church, Aberdeen

1. Yellow Leaf Church, Oxford, recognized its high school seniors. Shown are Wade Bishop, Tiffany Smith, Kelly Lewis, Kristi Ray, Donna Skipworth, and Ben East.
2. First Church, Philadelphia, held a note-burning ceremony on April 25 after a five-year Future by Faith program. Shown are pastor Dan Howard, Ryan McKay, Frank Moore, and Bob Henson.
3. Macedonia Church, Petal, held a purity ceremony where 21 young ladies and their families signed life promise sheets together. Mothers and daughters participated in Girls God classes which dealt with life issues girls face prior to the ceremony. Shown are the participants.
4. Billy Dowdy, missions director for Warren Association, was honored with a reception May 13. He served as AMD for 10 years. He was given a framed photo of the churches in the association as well as a love offering and prayer quilt. Shown are Jess Sumrall, pastor of Bovina Church, and Dowdy.
5. Old Oak Grove Church, Union County, placed two of its deacons on the inactive list and gave them the distinction of deacon emeritus with a special service and dinner. Shown are Union County AMD Charles Rogers, Harmon Jordan, Ray Brownlee, and pastor Bobby Butler.
6. Lighthouse Mission, Greenville, ordained Bobby Edmiston to the gospel ministry May 23. Shown are Ruth Edmiston, Edmiston, and pastor Jimmy McLendon.
7. Reagan Mayes, Meaghan Mayes, and Corbin Jenkins of Rocky Point Church, Leake Association, recently went to New York on a mission trip.
8. The widows of River Bend Church, Aberdeen, were honored with a luncheon May 27. Bill Davis, special guest. Shown are the participants.

STAFF CHANGES

1. Providence Church, Cleveland, called J.B. Hays' as pastor Jan. 31, beginning service Feb. 4. He has been in ministry for 33 years and served churches in Tennessee, Canada, and Kansas. He served First Church, Tutwiler, for 18 years, simultaneously serving Union Chapel. He is a North American Mission Board endorsed chaplain with Milestone Hospice, Cleveland. He is shown with his wife, Rose, and family, Joel Hays, Oxford, and Anna Hays, Clinton.



1. The Hays

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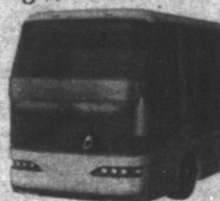
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2. Corinth Church, Heidelberg: June 14 - 18, 8 - 11:15 a.m.; kickoff parade and pre-registration, June 12, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.; nursery - 6th grade.
3. Unity Church, Moselle: July 7 - 9, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m. Sat. 8:30 - 3:30 p.m.
4. Bellevue Church, Thaxton: June 14 - 18, 6:30 - 8:35 p.m.; 4 years - 6th grade.
5. Longview Church, Starkville: June 21 - 23.

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REVIVALS AND HOMECOMINGS



4. Faith Church, Hickory Flat

1. Grandview Church, Pearl: 50th anniversary, June 27; services, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch.
2. County Line Church, Ovett: 150th anniversary, June 26 - 27; Sat, 4 p.m., reception and reminiscing; Sun., worship, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch and afternoon singing.
3. Philadelphia Church, Wesson: Homecoming, June 13; Doyle Cumming, speaker; for more information, call (601) 833-4099.
4. Faith Church, Hickory Flat, held a revival led by Campers on Mission, resulting in seven professions of faith and four additions by letter. Bill Dowdy, pastor. Shown are the leaders.
5. Elmo Church, Jefferson County: Homecoming, June 13; services, 10:30 a.m., followed by covered dish lunch; Dale Little, speaker; James Hunsucker, pastor.
6. Unity Church, Moselle: Homecoming, June 27; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch.
7. Eden Church, Eden: Revival, June 13 - 16; Sun., 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Malcom Pinson, speaker; Johnny Busby, pastor.
8. Red Lick Church, Lorman: Homecoming, June 26, 4 p.m., followed by pot luck supper; Jack Hollingsworth, music; a love offering will be received.
9. Bowlin Church, Sallis Community: Homecoming, June 13; services, 11 a.m., followed by lunch; Dwayne Cole, speaker.
10. High Hill Church, Neshoba County: Revival, June 13 - 16; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Don Savell, speaker.

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Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

By Rob Chambers

Miss. Baptist Christian Action Comm.

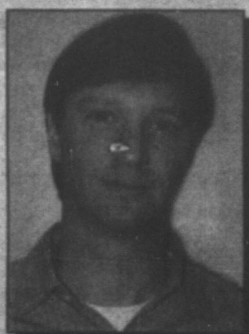
On a recent weekend vacation, my wife and I encountered what was not only a message for us but for others as well. Throughout our short stay we saw old and new friends and made new acquaintances. The common thread that ran throughout our conversations and experiences was the importance of hope and encouragement.

It's difficult to encourage someone if you don't have hope, and one thing that will erode a Christian's hope in day-to-day living is negativity. If someone is inundated with negativity, then it's hard to ward off a despairing attitude.

It is very unlikely that a person can go through the day without encountering some form of bad news or being bombarded with messages of negativity. Just turn on the news, read the paper, or open your email and you'll see numerous reports of depressing and pessimistic information.

You'll read accounts of our own state where we have been plagued with disasters of Biblical proportion - from life-taking tornadoes to a massive oil spill.

On the national scene you'll read about



Chambers

immigration laws and failing to secure our national borders.

There's so much political wrangling going on related to resolving these two issues (and much more) that the negative tone of these "conversations" will drive nearly anyone to toss their newspaper and unplug their TV - lest they find themselves singing Hee Haw's, "Gloom, despair, and agony on me..."

When we get exposed to so much negativity it can take root in our own life. If we allow it to do so, it will produce its fruit - hopelessness.

Christians do, however, need to be

the cost of health care skyrocket the making affordable health insurance practically unattainable and cost prohibitive for many. You'll also likely hear about the ever-increasing problems associated with the federal government failing to enforce existing

informed about what is going on in the culture and seek to be salt and light in the public square, but we don't need to be so consumed and driven by these issues that we neglect 'weightier' matters of our faith. James alludes to this when describing true religion as ministering to widows and orphans and being unstained by the world.

It is this aspect and general attitude of self-less encouragement and ministry to others that Christians ought to demonstrate toward others - starting with our own family and relatives, then our church family and on to the uttermost ends of the earth.

When we do this in deed, it will serve as a Light to lost people that there's something Savory in our lives. When they thirst for the Living Water, then we must be quick to share the soul quenching, Gospel message (John 4).

Christians, of all people, ought to be so full of hope on the inside that it manifests itself on our face and in our every expression, especially when facing adversity.

Recall how Timothy's face "was like that of an angel" when he was being falsely accused by religious leaders in Acts 6? Consider also Apostle Paul. In

Paul's defense before Agrippa in Acts 26, Paul turns a near hopeless situation where his accusers want him dead into a message of hope to all who heard him. It's encouraging to read numerous Biblical accounts of Paul communicating a message of hope amidst hardship.

Here're some practical principles to live by.

If you find a particular news source causing your blood to boil, give it a break and fill yourself with encouragement from the Word and/or take that time to encourage someone who needs it. Give them a phone call or a visit. They could even be under your very own roof.

Also, demonstrate your love for your family and friends. Encourage strangers along the way. Maintain a joyful, positive attitude by keeping your eyes on Christ. He alone is our anchor and holds true in times of trouble. He is the one who holds us safe and secure from all alarms. So, what do we have to fear or dread? Nothing. Through it all, let us be found leaning on His everlasting arms.

The author can be contacted at 601-292-3329 or at rchambers@christianaction.com.

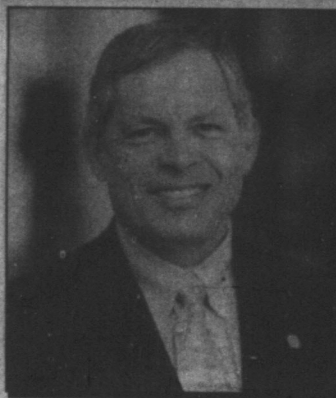
COLLEGE NEWS

1. **Mississippi College** President Lee Royce will take on new duties as the leader of a key panel in the American Southwest

Conference. The ASC Council of Presidents announced that Royce will serve as president of its executive committee for

2010-2011. The one-year appointment became effective June 1.

2. Combining her dual call to public relations and the ministry, Jill Waycaster West is the new development officer at Blue Mountain College. West, a cum laude graduate of the University of Mississippi, will be responsible for raising funds and working with alumni and friends of Blue Mountain College throughout the community and region.



1. Royce



2. West

OBITUARY

Charlotte Rose Causey, 78, former First Lady of Mississippi Baptists, died May 5. Funeral service was held May 7 at Parkway Church in Clinton, with interment immediately following in Lakewood Memorial Park in Jackson.

She was born October 10, 1931 in Winona to Lottie Shaw and Tillman U. Rose. She was graduated from Winona High School in 1949 and from Belhaven College in 1953, where she was named a Belhaven Beauty.

Charlotte Rose married William W. (Bill) Causey on January 24, 1954, and served in ministry alongside him as he pastored Hopewell Church, in Salvisa, Ky.; Poplar Springs Drive Church in Meridian; Parkway Church in Jackson; and while he served as executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson until his retirement in 1998.

She leaves behind her husband of 56 1/2 years, Bill Causey of Clinton; son, Billy Causey of Clinton and his wife Mary Leigh; two daughters, Carol and her husband Keith Turner of Clinton, and Carley Causey of Clinton; two grandsons, Bill and John Causey of Clinton; and many nieces and nephews.



Causey

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BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

When Religion Fails

1 Samuel 4:3-5, 10, 20-22; 5:1-4; 6:19-22

By Tony Martin

Well-meaning people often trust religion instead of trusting God. It's even possible for Christians to put more emphasis on their church building, pastor, denomination, or Sunday School room (is it too hot? Too cold? Chairs too hard?) than Christ Himself. This passage will show how to have a new appreciation of the holiness of God and renew a right commitment to Him, leading beyond the symbols of a religious faith.

Misplaced Trust (1 Sam. 4:3-5, 10)

The Israelites assumed that the very presence of the Ark of the Covenant would ensure victory in battle. Prior to this account, Israel had been defeated by the Philistines, and the elders of Israel were left scratching their heads. After all, weren't they God's people? God had plainly taught them how to fight wars,

but instead of being confessional and repentant, they decided to take the Ark of the Covenant into battle with them. In so doing, they were trying to manipulate God into behaving the way they thought He should.

This was a bad plan. The Israelites weren't seeking to follow God's will—they had their own agenda. When the ark showed up in the camp, the soldiers and elders yelled themselves hoarse, but this was just a setup for a terrible defeat. The Philistines were just that much more motivated to fight harder, and as a result they killed 30,000 Jewish soldiers. So the Israelites simply placed their trust in wrong things, and experienced a resounding defeat. Can you think of any ways we can make the same mistake today?

God Is Not In Them (1 Sam. 4:20-22)

One of the wicked priests who



Martin

man, but she was concerned about God's work among His people, first and foremost.

When this woman found out that the Ark had been captured and her father-in-law and husband were dead, she went into labor and gave birth, dying soon afterwards. She named her son "Ichabod," meaning "the glory is gone." The presence of God's glory in the camp had been evidence that the Israelites were the people of God, but now, the glory was gone. The sons of Eli were so certain that their scheme would save the glory of God, yet instead the glory of God was taken away.

This is strong stuff, because it is possible for the glory of God to be taken away from an individual, family, church, or even coun-

try. What would it take for us to realize when glory has been removed from our lives? What bears more weight in your life, God and His work or the social aspects of church? How do you know God's glory is present in your own life?

Treating the Holy as Common (1 Sam. 5:1-4; 6:19-21)

After the Philistines had captured the Ark, they placed it in the temple of their god Dagon in Ashdod as evidence that Dagon was more powerful than Jehovah God. Prior to this, the Philistines had been afraid of Jehovah, but now they were exalting their own gods before Him. Dagon was considered their principal god.

This didn't go well for the Philistines. The next morning, the people of Ashdod found Dagon on his face on the ground before the Ark. So they set him back up again before the Ark. Same thing—the next day, the torso of Dagon was found before the Ark again, with his head and hands strewn on the threshold. As if this weren't enough, the people who worshipped this god were also judged and punished (see 1 Sam. 5:6-12).

The Ark is soon afterwards returned to Israel. In what would be a fatal error, the Ark ends up in the community of Beth Shemesh, and several unworthy people decided they would take a peek at the Ark and died. If the Philistines were judged because of the way they had treated the Ark, then the punishment of the Jews who should have known better was that much more tragic. While God does not live in our church buildings or any furnishings, we do want to show respect for anything dedicated to God's glory. The believer must find a balance between not worshipping the "things" of God while at the same time showing appropriate respect to what is set aside to Him. We should be committed to God Himself and not just the things of God.

In last week's lesson, I inadvertently stated that it was Samuel who had the two sons who were the wicked priests. Of course, these were Eli's sons, and thanks go out to the good folks who caught my error.

Martin is the Associate Editor of The Baptist Record.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Three Ideas for Encouraging Church Leaders

1 Corinthians 4:1-21

By Laura Leathers

Several years ago I wrote a weekly e-mail devotional entitled, A Cup of Encouragement. It was simply a phrase followed by a verse of Scripture. How exciting it was to hear from subscribers how God used His Word to bring the encouragement they needed. His perfect timing. God's Word never returns void! This is the reason why a person needs to encourage others with the Word—herein lays the power. The words 'encourage' and 'encouragement' respectively means to strengthen and give support. Paul wrote, "encourage one another and build up one another" (1 The. 5:11). One of the greatest needs in the church is to encourage their churches' leaders.

Refuse to be Critical (1 Cor. 4:1-5)

Church leaders have a

tremendous responsibility. They are called to be servants and stewards, not kings, captains, or masters. The word servant in this passage means "under-rowers" and it described slaves who rowed the huge Roman galleys. A steward was one who managed everything his master possessed (see Gen 39; Luke 12:41-48). Trustworthy and faithful to his master are the manifestations of a successful steward. However, success will carry a cost for a steward as he fulfills his responsibilities for he will not be able to please everyone and there will no doubt be criticism. This is man's judgment. Paul gives a threefold rebuke when it came to the way the Corinthians were judging God's servants. It was at the wrong time, by the wrong standard, and with the wrong motive.



Leathers

"God's servants are stewards of His truth, and the key test is, have they been faithful to obey and to teach the Word of God? Not just faithful preaching, but faithful practicing as well" (Warren Wiersbe). God's judgment is the final evaluation. End criticism!

Recognize Their Service (1 Cor. 4:6-13)

Pride has a way of raising its ugly head to cause disunity in the church. But genuine humility will bring unity. Paul, with vivid sarcasm, uses a series of contrasts to prove his point: kings—prisoners; wise men—fools; strong men—weak; honorable—despised. His goal was to point out the reality of how much he suffered yet always continued in his ministry. "Paul did not say that God separated him to show what a wonderful man He could make of him, but 'to reveal His Son in me'" (vs. 13—Oswald Chambers).

Recently I heard a pastor share with confidence and deep

emotion, "I have a deep sense that God has called me, God choose this for me," referencing his place of service. He wasn't saying it with a prideful attitude but with a deep sense of humbleness. Church leaders are encouraged when we recognize and affirm their call and service to God on our behalf.

Accept Their Guidance (1 Cor. 4:14-21)

A child may have many tutors, but they have only one father. In all of the letters Paul wrote he never referred to himself as "father". Yet, he reminded the Corinthians they were his children in the faith (vv. 14-15), he was an example to the family (vv. 16-17), and he was faithful to disciple the family (vv. 18-21) (Warren Wiersbe). Paul's deep affection for his children, the Corinthians, in the faith was his main reason for guiding them in their Christian lives.

Someone has said, "In order to minister to others you have to stay connected to the Father." As a spiritual father Paul wrote, "be imitators of me" (v. 16). He was not being egotistic but encouraging, pointing

the way, "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord... so that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:7-8 NASB). Paul emphasizes our lives are to be lived in God's power (vs. 20). "Spiritual character is measured not by the impressiveness of words, but in the power of the life" (Mt 7:21-23) (MacArthur Study Bible).

Church leaders deserve our love, prayers, respect and support. How do you encourage your churches' leaders? It starts by being faithful to His Word, "Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 15:5 NASB). Now that's encouragement!

Leathers is a member of First Church, Durant.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

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Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if

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All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape-, building-, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many couples and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor with taste and respect those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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BCV Bi-Annual Alumni Reunion Saturday, July 10, 2010

Schedule

10:00 a.m. Registration at BCV Headquarters (805 N Flag Chapel Rd)
11:00 a.m. Depart for Star, MS to tour new India Nunnery Campus
12:30 p.m. Lunch and entertainment from Percy Peeler (husband of alumnus Linda McHann Peeler)
3:00 p.m. Leave Star and return to BCV Headquarters
4:00 p.m. Adjourn

Alumni dues \$10

Lunch Cost \$5

Contact: Mrs. Chrystelle Thames, BCV Director of Public Relations, at 601-922-2242 or cthames@baptistchildrensvillage.com.
Visit www.baptistchildrensvillage.com or follow The BCV on Facebook and Twitter for more info.

Afghan official calls for killing of Christian converts

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — An Afghan parliamentary official has called for the public execution of Christian converts from Islam following a television report that raised the suspicion of proselytizing and resulted in the suspension of two Christian aid organizations.

The report was broadcast by the little-known Afghan channel Noorin TV, described by The New York Times as an "antigovernment gadfly," and it showed photographs purportedly of Westerners baptizing Afghans and videotapes of Afghans praying to Jesus.

A European diplomat told AFP that Noorin TV had broadcast controversial reports in the past and there might be a "hidden political agenda at a time when stirring up anti-foreign sentiment is quite fashionable in Kabul."

Church World Service, an American organization, and Norwegian Church Aid, both of which have served in Afghanistan for more than 30 years, were asked to leave the country because of suspicions that they were involved in converting Afghans to Christianity.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai called for an investigation into the organizations and "strongly instructed" government officials to take "immediate and serious action" to prevent further conversions, according to a report by AFP.

The broadcasts triggered a protest by hundreds of Kabul University students May 31, and International Christian Concern, online at persecution.org, said Abdul Sattar Khawasi, deputy secretary of the Afghan lower house in parliament, called for executions.

"Those Afghans that appeared in this video film should be executed in public. The house should order the attorney general and the NDS [intelligence agency] to arrest these Afghans and execute them," Khawasi said.

Afghanistan's constitution,

which is based on sharia law, forbids proselytizing and decrees that converting from Islam to another religion is punishable by death.

"It is absolutely appalling that the execution of Christians would be promoted on the floor of the Afghan parliament," Aidan Clay, ICC's regional manager for the Middle East, said June 2. "Khawasi's statement sounded a whole lot like the tyrannical manifesto of the Taliban, not that of a U.S. ally."

"American lives are being lost fighting terrorism and defending freedom in Afghanistan, yet Christians are being oppressed within Afghan borders. This comes after billions of U.S. dollars have been invested in the war effort and millions more have been given in aid," Clay said.

"The U.S. government must intervene to protect the religious freedoms and human rights of all Afghans. The U.S. is not a mere outside bystander but is closely intertwined within Afghan policy. Intervention is not a choice but a responsibility, as Afghan policies reflect the U.S. government's ability and commitment to secure a stable government in Afghanistan."

ICC also reported that many Afghan Christians are in hiding, fearful of execution. Government pressure has caused some Afghans to reveal names and locations of Christian converts, the human rights organization said.

More than 1,000 aid organizations operate in Afghanistan, AFP said, and most of them are funded by Western countries. Some have been accused of preaching Christianity.

A spokesman for Afghanistan's ministry of economy, which oversees aid groups, said the two suspended organizations were known for "doing a good job here," according to The Times. The ministry decided on the suspensions, he said, because the television report raised suspicions and "made people very emotional

and angry," despite actual evidence, or the lack thereof, against the groups.

Even the director of Noorin TV told The Times he had no evidence that the aid organizations had been involved in proselytizing. They were only included in the report after station employees found them in a local telephone directory of non-governmental organizations and noticed that they each had the word "church" in their names.

"Norwegian Church Aid has no mandate to influence people's religious beliefs in any part of the world — neither in Afghanistan," the organization said in a statement on its website May 31. "Norwegian Church Aid's overall goal in Afghanistan is to improve living conditions for vulnerable and marginalized people through sustainable utilization of local human and natural resources in integrated agricultural development projects."

Church World Service also denied any involvement in proselytizing.

"Our work is entirely humanitarian — meaning we are impartial, neutral, and independent," deputy director Maurice Bloem said. "We fully adhere to and support the Red Cross/Red Crescent Code of Conduct, which mandates that NGOs do nothing to further a religious agenda."

"We have never and will never engage in any religious proselytism. Such activities are contrary to our mandate as a humanitarian organization, and we fully respect the religion of the communities we serve," Bloem said.

Church World Service, headquartered in Elkhart, Ind., is a cooperative ministry of more than 30 Protestant and Orthodox denominations and works in more than 80 countries, the Associated Press said. Norwegian Church Aid is tied to Norway's Lutheran state church and receives financial support from the country's gov-



PRIMITIVE CONDITIONS — Girls at the Chehelan School outside Kabul, Afghanistan, sit on the ground during a class as a backhoe works on the foundation of the new school. The Chehelan School was completely destroyed during the Afghan Civil War in the early 1990s. The Coalition Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force is rebuilding the school using a local Afghan contractor. Currently, the 650 students have classes on the ground or in metal shipping containers. (BP photo)

ernment as it operates in 125 nations.

Another spokesman for the Afghan ministry of economy told Reuters that if the organizations are found to have been involved in conversion activities, they will face Afghanistan's judicial authorities. If not, they can resume their operations.

Reuters said NGOs remain

involved in humanitarian projects ranging from health to education but some Afghans are skeptical of their motives and suspect they could be a front for proselytizing. AP said proselytizing is a hot-button issue for many Afghans who are sensitive to the influence of foreigners helping them recover from decades of war.

Jesus spoof on Comedy Central draws protests from watchdog groups

WASHINGTON (BP) — Saying it's not a boycott, a coalition of like-minded traditional groups announced June 3 they would try to keep a Comedy Central cartoon about Jesus Christ off the air by preemptively pressuring advertisers not to sponsor it.

The cartoon, JC, is still in development but its description has troubled Christian groups. According to the Associated Press, the cartoon would depict Jesus as a "regular guy" who moves to New York City to "escape his father's enormous shadow."

Christ's father will be depicted as "an apathetic man who would rather play video games than listen to his son talk about his new life."

Comedy Central, the coalition

says, has a double standard when it comes to religion, often editing shows such as the irreverent South Park so as not to offend Muslims. In April an episode of South Park even bleeped out references to Muhammad and placed a black box over images of him following an apparent violent threat from an Islamic website. Viacom owns Comedy Central.

There's no guarantee that JC will make it to air even without pressure from advertisers — many series in development never make it that far — but the coalition wants to make sure.

"Anyone who advertises on this show will be a sponsor of anti-Christian bigotry," Brent Bozell, president of the Media Research Center, said on a conference call with reporters. "...We

feel quite confident that once they see what exactly they would be sponsoring, that no decent company is going to want to have anything to do with this."

The coalition, calling itself Citizens Against Religious Bigotry, is sending a letter to more than 250 advertisers, urging them "to hold back your advertising dollars from such an abomination purported to be entertainment."

The letter asks the advertisers to respond within two weeks as to whether they will decline to sponsor JC. The coalition will announce on June 17 which advertisers have responded.

"No sponsor could possibly say they would be proud to be associated with such insensitive material," the letter, signed by 19 groups and individuals, reads.

The coalition released a three-minute video showing Comedy Central's past depictions of Christianity, such as a South Park clip in which one of the characters stabs Jesus with a knife and another South Park clip in which Jesus points to a dog-like creature and says, "[This] is my father the creator. He is the alpha, the omega, the beginning and the end."

In another Comedy Central clip, Jesus is seen defecating on President George W. Bush.

"The double standard is shocking," said Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council. "When Christians attempt a serious discussion over our theological or political differences...we're called intolerant. Why does Comedy Central give such deference to Islam while

mocking Christianity?"

Tony Perkins is not related to the editor of The Baptist Record, William H. Perkins Jr.

Even if South Park did not edit references to Muhammad and there was no double standard, the coalition would still be taking a stand, Bozell said.

"The double standard just jumps off the page, but I think that all religions ought to be treated with respect," he said.

Radio host Michael Medved, who is Jewish and is part of the coalition, said he knows some people will respond to the coalition by arguing traditionalists should just "turn it off" and not watch it. That, though, is not the point, Medved said. The show, he said, is "needlessly hurtful, patently offensive and full of malice."